

SOMERSET, FITZROY RICHARD (1885 - 1964) 4th BARON RAGLAN, soldier, anthropologist, author

Name: Fitzroy Richard Somerset
Date of birth: 1885
Date of death: 1964
Spouse: Julia Somerset (née Hamilton)
Parent: Ethel Jemima Somerset (née Ponsonby)
Parent: George FitzRoy Henry Somerset
Gender: Male
Occupation: soldier, anthropologist, author
Area of activity: Literature and Writing; Military; Science and Mathematics
Author: Emrys George Bowen

Born 10 June 1885, eldest son of the [3rd Baron Raglan](#) and Ethel Jemima Ponsonby, daughter of the 7th Earl of Bessborough. The 4th Lord Raglan succeeded to the title in 1921 as the great-grandson of the [1st baron](#) who received the title in 1852 when Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in the Crimea.

Lord Raglan was educated at Eton and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst and following the family tradition entered the Army. He joined the Grenadier Guards in 1905 and held the rank of Captain in 1914 and Major in 1919. His first post overseas was A.D.C. to the Governor of Hong Kong (1912-13). In the latter year he joined the Egyptian Army and remained in the Eastern Mediterranean Area until 1921, for the first six years with the Egyptian Forces and later from 1919 until he returned in 1922 he was a political officer in Palestine. In recognition of his services in Egypt he was made an Officer of the Order of the Nile.

The military phase may be considered as the first phase of Lord Raglan's life for it was followed in the 1930s by a second, though somewhat different, one. It is clear, however, that both phases are closely related. During his service with the Egyptian Forces he became deeply interested in the archaeology of ancient Egypt as well as the physical anthropology of the native troops, being, for example, particularly fascinated by the fine physique of the Nilotic negroes. These interests he developed on his return to Britain. In 1932 he took an active part, with his close friend C. Darryll Forde (then Professor of geography and anthropology at the U.C.W., Aberystwyth) in the excavations in that and later years conducted at the important Iron Age hill fort of Pen Dinas, outside Aberystwyth. By 1933 he was sufficiently advanced in anthropology to become president that year of Section H (Anthropology) of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, while during the two years (1945-47) his interests in social anthropology were recognized by his election to the presidency of the Folklore Society. Ten years later he was president of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and had been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. Meanwhile he turned his full attention to Wales and the archaeological field, occupying a succession of key positions at the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. In 1947-51 he was chairman of the Museum Archaeology and Art Committee, in 1950-52, treasurer of the Museum, in 1952-57 vice-president and finally, in 1957-62, president.

Ever since his return to Britain he was not only an active member of many societies and interested in administrative duties in national institutions but also published a large number of important and interesting books and papers on archaeology and anthropology. In 1933 appeared *Jocasta's crime - an anthropological study*, and in the same year *The Science of peace* and followed in 1934 by *If I were dictator*. Two years later saw *The Hero - a study in tradition, myth and drama* followed three years later by *How came civilization?* After World War II there followed several studies in primitive religion; 1945 saw *Death and Re-birth*, 1949 *The Origins of Religion* and in 1964 *The Temple and the house*. While Lord Raglan became more and more closely associated with the National Museum he naturally became more closely associated with the director, [Sir Cyril Fox](#) and in the years 1951-54 a *Survey of Monmouthshire Houses, I-III*, prepared in collaboration with [Sir Cyril Fox](#), appeared. This work was a survey of pioneer importance.

Lord Raglan's anthropological work has not been universally well received. This is largely due to the fact that the topics discussed are too contentious, complex and wide ranging to be dealt with within the confines of a single volume. The topics also present a temptation to provide simple solutions for highly complex situations, e.g. that men wear hats because they wish to be like kings who wear crowns. Many scholars too are of the opinion that Lord Raglan, an interesting and charming man, loved deliberately to provoke those who held strongly opposite views to his own and to watch with amusement their reactions, yet remaining on the most intimate personal terms with those who disagreed with him. His well-known views concerning the marked emergence of Welsh national feeling in post- World War II Wales is a case in point.

Behind his military, anthropological and archaeological interests and achievements there is yet another facet of Lord

Raglan's life yet to be added, namely the long and devoted services which he rendered to the old county of Monmouth and to the whole of Gwent. He was a Justice of the Peace for the county as early as 1909 and served for twenty-one years (1928-49) as a member of the former Monmouthshire county council. He took a great interest in the Boy Scout movement and was county commissioner for Monmouthshire for twenty seven years (1927-54). He was deputy Lord Lieutenant for the county in 1930, becoming Lord Lieutenant in 1960. In 1923 he married the Hon. Julia Hamilton, daughter of the 11th Baron Belhaven. There were two sons and two daughters. The family home was at Cefntilla Court, Usk, Gwent. He died 14 September 1964.

Author

Professor Emrys George Bowen, (1900 - 1983)

Sources

Reports of the meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1933
personal knowledge

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [FitzRoy Somerset, 4th Baron Raglan](#)

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q2314878](#)

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